

£1

“Tried in the gutter for
an anti-racist stance”:

Caribbean Times 23/12/88

Highbury Quadrant

THE SUN SAYS
**The tyrants
of Islington**

**School alert
sounded 18
months ago**

SCHOOLS FOR SCANDAL

**Low level tasks
'failing children'**

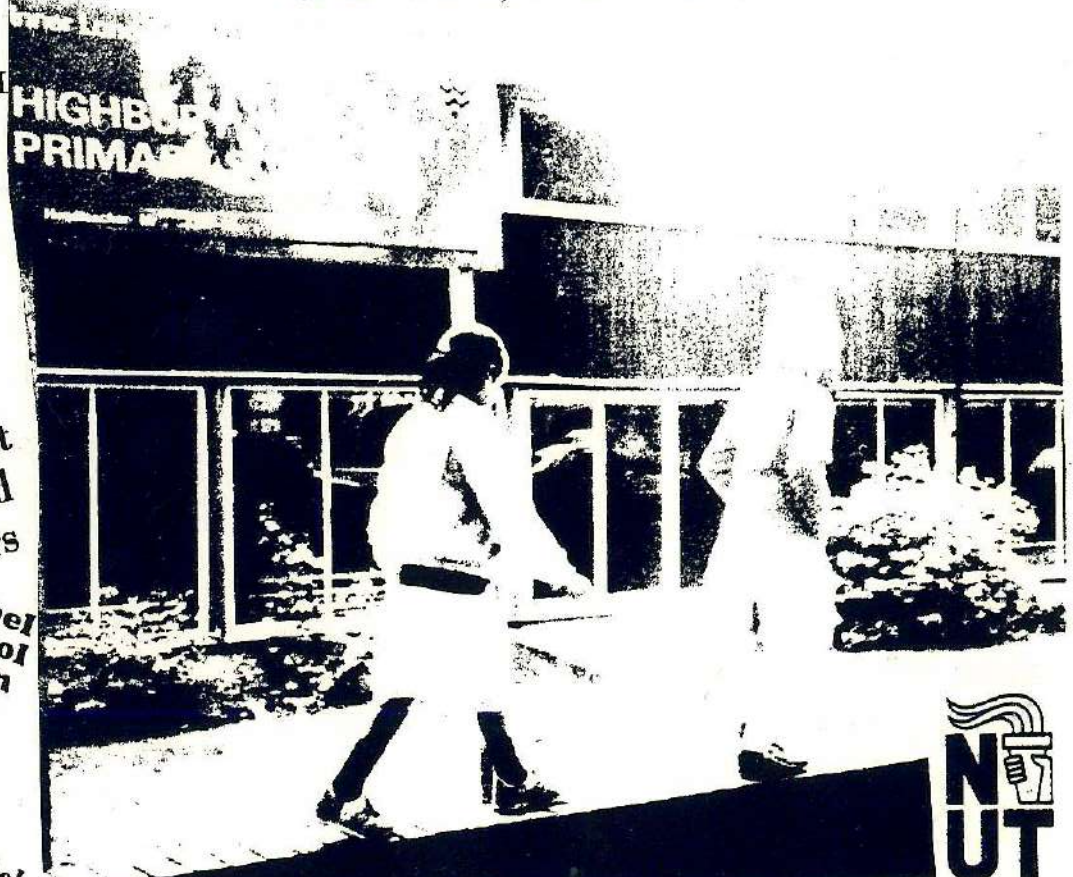
**8 teachers at
Mandela row
school get axe**

**Race witch-hunt
claim by ousted
schoolteachers
governors oppose
teachers' transfer**

**Removal of teachers
sparks ethnic row**

**They w
all s
profes**
7 staff unlikely
to remain at
'low-standard'
primary school

Sunday Express
School of scandal



NUT

HACKNEY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

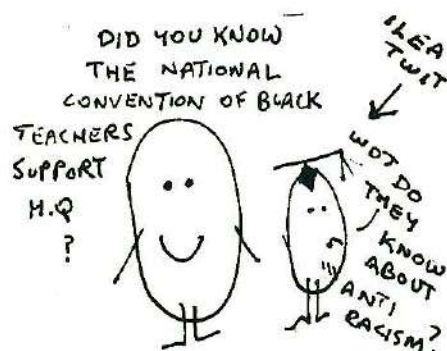
23, Walford Road N16 8EF

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Special thanks to the following for helping to compile this pamphlet:

The Highbury Quadrant 6
 Susie Burrows.
 Lynette Hubah.
 Phyllis King.
 Tracey Grant.
 Richard Rieser.
 Loughlin Scully.
 Anna Sullivan
 Mark Lushington
 Brian (Cartoons)



Many thanks to the children, parents and staff of William Patten Infants School, Stoke Newington for their solidarity and support.

Foreword.

We, the Highbury Quadrant Teachers, transferred, wish to offer sincere thanks to Hackney Teachers Association, schools and teachers for their consistent support throughout our campaign. In particular, we are grateful to H.T.A for publishing this pamphlet giving a most comprehensive, up-to-date account of events. We feel that there are lessons to be learned by all teachers from our story. We would also like to personally thank Richard Rieser, Secretary of H.T.A for agreeing to be our caseworker. We approached him because of his proven track record of very successful campaigning for members rights. He has worked unstintingly on our behalf and even managed to keep us going when our morale was at rock-bottom.

We have been victimised because of our commitment to anti-racist education and our trade-union. Remember you could be next!

Maggi Morrison Audrey Clarke.
 Irene Fiele. JUNE ADAMS
 Margaret James

The Lessons of Highbury Quadrant

There are many lessons from the Highbury Quadrant affair. Perhaps the most important for teachers all over the country was the National NUT Officers' refusal to give the members the sort of backing needed to force the ILEA to back down. After all, hadn't the Union just re-organised itself to deal with just these types of school-based issues which are more and more likely to arise with LFM, opting-out, and the increased powers of governing bodies?

Here was the largest Education Authority in the country, entering its last year of existence, behaving in a totally cavalier and unprofessional way. Scapegoating teachers for its own managerial shortcomings. Not prepared to support its teachers for implementing ILEA's own anti-racist policies. Now any detractor from these policies only has to fabricate an incident, leak it to the press, and a whole host of self proclaimed pundits will demand that Kenneth Baker takes action, which further erodes the delivery of a good anti-racist education, substituting 'colour-blindness', bigotry and right wing dogma.

The involvement of the New Right is also interesting. Barbara Robson, Leader of the London Good Schools Campaign, which is linked through Baroness Cox to the Campaign for Real Education and Honeyford, was able to make a comment about the school in the Sun Newspaper on 28.7.88 "This is absolutely typical of this school There are a bunch of trouble-makers there who are determined that everyone should follow their line". On 12.12.88 Barbara Robson becomes the Tory governor for the school.

Diana Stuart called the Mandela assembly an 'ANC Rally'. It is clear that Diana Stuart did take her complaint to the press, though ILEA have chosen to ignore the evidence presented to them.

Following the press reports on the Mandela assembly and the alleged incident, Peter Dawson (PAT), David Hart (NHTA), and Geoffrey Dickens and Robert Key, MPs, among others, were prepared to call for Kenneth Baker to intervene. He then did, ordering ILEA to launch an investigation into political bias and sending the HMI into the school.

Is it a coincidence that Rising Hill, William Tyndale and Highbury Quadrant all occurred in Islington? Is the common theme of local middle class parents linked to sections of the Right of the Labour Party? Since July 1988 all the local Labour Party wards have, however, given the teachers massive support.

But the hostility the teachers received whilst implementing official NUT salaries action and com-

bating the racism in and around the school was rooted, in part, in the right of the local Labour Party. There were also attacks from quarters on the Left. A few influential parents who were members of the Socialist Workers Party removed their children from the school, apparently because of the effects of the official Union action.

The alliance of forces that organised against the teachers, mainly clandestinely, is worth considering. You will see from this pamphlet that this started long before the Mandela assembly.

The Divisional Office of ILEA, the Headteacher, newly appointed to the school supported by her 'Union' NHTA, the Chair of Governors, Jenni Hall, who in 1987 wrote a letter of complaint to Barry Stead, then ILEA Chair of Schools, the contents of which no teacher was ever given the chance to comment upon. Ian MacDonald, who chose to attack the teachers for what he called doctrinaire anti-racism, anti-sexism and trade unionism.

Were his influential views in the Burnage Report framed by his opposition to the good anti-racist work and effective teacher trade unionism at his own children's school?

The SWP have attacked the school with inaccurate accounts of their anti-racist/anti-sexist work (Socialist Worker 17.12.88, 24.12.88 and 7.1.1989).

The tragedy of the Highbury Quadrant affair was that when teachers, especially primary, heard all the facts about what had happened at the school, they did support strike action to get the teachers re-instated.

To win a campaign the leadership needs to send out detailed information regularly, visit schools and explain the issues. If this work had been done in time, a sufficient number of teachers in London would have been so angered that the executive would have had to support calls for action.

It became apparent at meetings that because there had been political differences with some teachers at the school in the past, the leadership of the Division and the local Association were not prepared to build the necessary campaign to get their reinstatement. Some Officers publicly criticised the teachers. This is not "unconditional support". This sectarianism has helped destroy the careers and lives of six teachers.

But it is the National Union Officers, who made the deal over Christmas with ILEA, without consulting the teachers, who set the seal on the fate of Highbury Quadrant. This will affect us all.

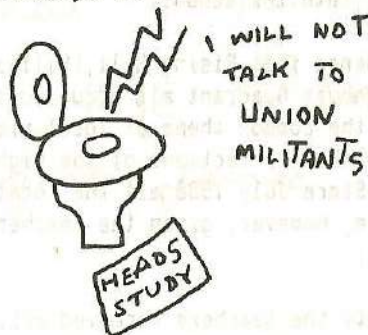
Trade Unionism Under Attack.

I joined the staff of Highbury Quadrant School in January 1986. I had worked at my previous primary school for seven years where I was the Union rep. for most of that time. I was also part of the Womens' Collective Secretariat for nearly two years in the Islington Union Branch.

When I started working at Highbury Quadrant the deputy Head was acting Head, as Anne Webb, (the new Headteacher) was not to start until April. Within a short time I was elected school Union rep, and in the following paragraphs I have tried to give a picture of the next eighteen months and the events that took place;

1. From the beginning of Ann Webb's Headship she keeps herself aloof from the staff, rarely comes into the staffroom and has her 'engaged' sign on her door even when we know she is alone. The staff find it almost impossible to talk to her about anything - as she is rarely available. She even begins to lock herself in.
2. During the Summer term the Union group, having escorted the children suffering racial attacks for 18 months, decide it is time ILEA takes responsibility for this. The Authority have been giving no support.
3. We write a letter to ILEA (the then leader Frances Morrell) asking for help and for the establishment of a post for a Bengali Liaison worker between home and school. Morrell does not even reply until two months later and only after there has been a Thames TV report on the escort.
4. We have support from the Local Council Race Relations Committee for our request to ILEA and, also from ILEA Multi-ethnic Committee. Because of their support we win the Liaison Worker post but not help for the escort.
5. The staff decide to inform the Local Community about what is happening in the area. The escalation of racist attacks and how this is affecting the children. Anne Webb agrees to this and the leaflet is written. The Tenants' Association on the Estate where the escorted children live are also told and we have a meeting with them. The leaflet was written with the involvement of as many people as possible - it is re-written many times until it was alright for everyone.
6. Having agreed to the leaflet, Anne Webb says we cannot give it out (on the day of distribution). We have teachers, parents and the involvement of the T.A. in this, Mike Claydon, the acting Divisional Officer, is also saying we cannot give it out, and they both shout at Kate Rex trying to intimidate her. We decide to go ahead.
7. This leaflet which we called "Children at Risk" gave details of the attacks and asked for the local community to be vigilant, and to take some responsibility for the escalation of racism in the area. The leaflet was given out, not only on the Estate where the children lived, but in the whole surrounding area. We did this on a rota basis every night after school. It took 3 weeks going to every house.
8. Anne Webb says that she will not talk to the NUT - that is me as the Rep.
9. A part time music teacher's job is cut from the AUR without any consultation. The teacher, a member of the NUT, was distraught. I go to Anne Webb with the teacher to try to discuss this. She refuses to speak to me and slams the door in my face and leaves the music teacher outside in the corridor crying.
10. I find out that Ann Webb has called the Teacher in charge of the nursery into her office (a rare occasion - she unlocked the door!) An Inspector and another teacher are allowed to professionally criticise and verbally abuse her, without giving her access to representation by her Union.

We have to call in Stuart Canket, a Union Official, to sort this out. (I could not get hold of the local officers). After that I am always present in any meeting with the management. We feel this teacher was being harassed because of her Union militancy, as were many of us.



11. Almost at the end of the Summer term we are told that a Black teacher is to be moved from our school. We appeal against this decision, as do many of the parents, especially as they intend to send her to a school with a very powerful parents' group involved with the local National Front. This incident is quoted in the Kanji Report as an example of Union militancy.

Unfortunately we could not stop her transfer. We went to meet the acting D.O. Mike Claydon. The local Secretary and President of our branch were present. She was moved.

12. At the beginning of Autumn term 1986, another teacher, who has already been given a class for the year, was suddenly told he had to move because 'they had got their staffing wrong'. I meet with Cath Isaacs, the Primary Inspector, and the Staffing Officer and show that they have acted outside the Staff Code and reluctantly they have to back down, and the teacher stays. This teacher again was a strong Union member.
13. September 1986 We are told that we will be visited for 3 days by Inspectors, Ted Mercer, Ron Letheren and Cath Isaacs. We are told that we will have not only inspectors in our classrooms, but that we have to see them individually for interview. I phoned local Officers and could not reach them. So then I phoned Stuart Cankett and asked what the procedure was in interviews with Inspectors. He assured me that I could be present as Rep. with any member of staff requesting this. When the Inspectors arrived I gave a note to each member of staff asking if they wanted me present. Many said yes. I gave this list to the Head for her to arrange cover for me, whereupon an emergency staff meeting was called in school time, where Ron Letheren proceeded to lecture us all about how unnecessary it was for anyone to have a witness, and how the talks were just going to be friendly!!

Extracts from the Secret Gulzar Kanji Report November 1988

I set out below a list of incidents/papers that demonstrate the militancy of the staff:

- concern about militancy of the staff runs through the termly reviews
- 1978 Ron Letheren's letter, regarding Kate Rex's refusal to visit a school for the purposes of transfer, to Jessica Jenkins AEO/P shows the GI's concern about the unprofessional conduct of a probationer.
- 1984 Anti-racist action group wrote to the Governors demanding that black teachers should fill the vacancies in the school.
- June 1986 Notes on a meeting between the London Borough of Islington and ILTA indicate the extent of involvement of the teachers of Highbury Quadrant in issues of social/political nature.
- July 1986 NUT group at Highbury Quadrant protested against the decision to move Marie Gordon, a black teacher.
- July 1986 Mike Claydon's (DEO - 3) letter demonstrates the concerns felt by parents about children being sent home and the quality of learning.
- October/November 1986 Complaint from ILTA through Mike Loosley to the GI about the treatment of their members when a team of inspectors visited the school on 15th, 16th and 17th September resulted in a minute from Ron Letheren and also David Hargreaves, GI.

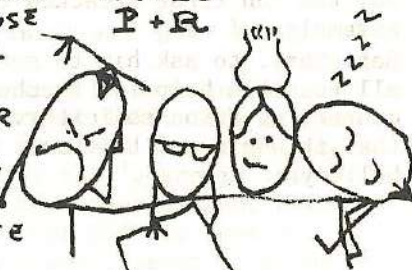
Kate Rex and myself were the only 2 teachers who did not feel intimidated into backing down. This resulted in me being called into the Head's office where 3 Inspectors proceeded to tell me that I had no rights at all, and that I would be taken to the law if I refused to see them alone. I went to phone Shaun Docherty and begged him to come to the school in the afternoon to give me some support as a Local Officer, as I was being threatened. He refused to come saying that he could not interfere because the Inspectors would not like it!! So I had to go back and argue with them all on my own. In the end they gave in and Kate Rex and I were interviewed together and were asked personal questions about other members of staff. This incident has since been recorded in various documents of the Authority as an example of how unmanageable we were.

14. In April of 1987 Anne Webb decided to transfer a child from one class to another without any consultation with the teachers. This child was to be transferred to my class and I am just sent a note by the Head informing me of this. I asked her for a meeting and she hides in the kitchen. Eventually I see her with another teacher as my witness, and ask her to reconsider her decision as there has been no consultation. She says 'I am the Head. I can do as I like'. I reply that I think this is bad management. She then leaves the school, never to return!
15. During this 18 month period we were carrying out official Union Policy and implementing all the sanctions - one day cover, no staff meetings, parents meetings or report writing outside school time. We felt under continued criticism for this e.g. by some governors in the presence of the Divisional Officer, and by Anne Webb. In fact we very much wanted to have curriculum staff meetings, and post-holders many times asked to be allowed this in school time or with early closure as Other schools were doing, but with two exceptions were always refused. We were, in fact, continuing teacher initiated INSET in school time.

Agenda

1. MODERNISING HAMILTON HOUSE
2. REGIONAL OFFICES
3. WALLPAPER
4. BLACKPOOL RESTAURANTS
5. TOOTHPASTE
6. HIGBURY SOMETHING OR OTHER...

**NUT
EXEC
P + R**



Indeed, the Divisional Officer and the Inspector called a meeting in the evening at the Teachers' Centre, to discuss the future of the school. They invited all the teachers who could not go because of Union action, and all the school support staff including kitchen staff, where they were asked to openly voice their criticisms, mostly of the teachers! Some of the criticisms were based on racist attitudes and prejudices. In a primary school we would expect that when anti-racist and anti-sexist initiatives are part of the school curriculum, the Head would organise discussions with the support staff and explain, and back the teachers implementing these policies. We later discovered the Head was doing the opposite.

At the above meeting the Divisional Officer took down the names of all teachers not present - this was obvious harassment of NUT members.

16. We took a motion to our Local Branch asking for support to stop us being harassed for Union Policy. Although we felt supported by the membership of the branch, the Officers did not seem to do anything about it.
17. At the same time we were coming under attack from the governing body, who criticised us for being sick, for our no-cover policy and other sanctions. This was then broadened out to include criticisms of our anti-racist work. These were mainly by middle-class Labour Party members. There was one governor's meeting where several of us attended as observers, and the chair, Jenni Hall, led a vociferous attack on the teachers. At this meeting we were told the anti-racist work had all gone too far. A parent observer shouted aggressively that the school was 'in the grip of the Union' and that we were holding 'secret cell meetings'. We expected this not to be taken seriously, but it was accepted by most governors, the D.O. and the Head.
18. I left the school at the end of Summer Term 1987, having been given a secondment! A year later I was phoned up by one of the teachers for advice, on the day the Sun first attacked the Mandela assembly. I rang the Local Branch Secretary, to ask him to set in motion all possible help for teachers e.g. contacting Union solicitor. He replied that it would all blow over in the holidays

I disagreed with his view and knew this was the start of a serious attack on the school. And so I spoke to Richard Rieser, who I know and have worked with and asked his advice. He advised me of all the correct procedures and gave us a detailed list of necessary actions to take. I gave this to the school NUT group.

We now see the removal of teachers who cared very much about children, especially those whose lives are torn apart by the horror of racism. Who now will bother or be allowed to do anything about this?

Anna Sullivan



Extract from Ian Macdonald at Race and Education Conference - Ealing 4/2/89

Discussion Ian Macdonald

DONT MAKE OUT

THAT YOU WERE MOVED FROM HIGHBURY QUADRANT BECAUSE OF THE ANTIRACIST WORK BECAUSE THAT IS A LIE YOU WERE MOVED BECAUSE YOU AND A GROUP OF TEACHERS VIRTUALLY MADE THAT SCHOOL UNMANAGABLE FOR THE REST OF US WHERE YOU BROOKED NO OPPOSITION THATS WHY IT WAS NECESSARY AND WHY AGREE WITH THE IDEA IF YOU GET TOO DOCTINAIRE IF WE ARE ALWAYS RIGHT THEN GOD HELP THOSE WHO OPPOSE US HOW CAN YOU DISCUSS ITS A KIND OF TRADE UNION CRETINISM THAT SEEMS TO GET HOLD OF PEOPLE A KIND OF ANTIRACIST CRETINISM THAT GETS HOLD OF PEOPLE

The Assembly - and Beyond.

THE MANDELA ASSEMBLY

On July 18th 1988, along with many other ILEA schools, Highbury Quadrant held an assembly to celebrate Nelson Mandela's birthday. The children shared their work which had included baking and icing cakes, singing, art work and writing about what freedom meant to them. The following day Diana Stuart, a teacher at the school, complained that she had been criticised by Kate Rex in front of pupils for failing to attend and alleged that this constituted harassment. Subsequently, during the Summer holidays, articles appeared in the Sun, Daily Mail, Daily Express and London Evening Standard villifying the school, and quoting Ms Stuart's allegations of harassment. These allegations were fully investigated by the ILEA 3 months later and Kate Rex was completely cleared of having harassed or abused Ms Stuart.

HATE MAIL

Following the press reports the school and Kate Rex in particular, received a flood of extremely racist hate mail and threatening phone calls. This not only threatened Kate's personal safety but made the school a focus of right wing attack and put every black person connected to the school at risk from attack.

INVESTIGATION

The Mandela Assembly had fallen well within the ILEA Guidelines so we were surprised that instead of supporting the school and its teachers, the Authority carried out an investigation into the allegations made in the gutter press starting from the point that we were guilty.

BELONGING TO THE NUT - NOT PROFESSIONAL

Having previously seen very few Inspectors and Officers of the Authority we were constantly visited in the first weeks of term, most often in a threatening and unsupportive way. Our school Inspector Yvonne Conolly was one of the most intimidating of the visitors. She declared on one of her first visits that our school was just another William Tyndale. When we said we would have to have an NUT Officer present in the investigations she became very angry, threatening and made it clear that she saw a serious conflict of interest in being a Union member and a professional teacher!

When Ms Conolly visited the school in September she noticed a 5 year old wearing a 'Free Nelson Mandela' badge. Having grilled the child to establish that her teacher had not given it to her she took the teachers to task for allowing the child to wear the badge. She argued most strongly we should not allow such badges because if we did we would have to allow Nazi insignia. We have no difficulty in arguing against this. We were stunned to hear it from an Inspector of ILEA.

She went on to make it clear that staff also should not be allowed to wear badges.

It was reported to her that the day after she inspected a teacher came to school 'covered in badges', which Ms Conolly reported to her superior.

PARENTS DISREGARDED

We were very concerned about the way the Authority ignored our parents, and refused to meet their obligations to inform them about what was going on in school. They would not write to the parents or call a meeting and would not allow staff at the school to do so. This left the parents with the press and Union as their only source of information. Eventually the Divisional Officer wrote a most uninformative letter to the parents in late October in which he said that issues to do with the assembly were being investigated. The effect of this was that parents became more concerned.

INVESTIGATION REPORTED

The results of the investigations were reported by David Mallen, Education Officer of the ILEA to the DES, in what must be one of the most shameful of the ILEA's documents. In it he claims that Nelson Mandela is a controversial figure and should have been taught with 'balance'. We were, he said, wrong to have held Nelson Mandela as a hero.

INSPECTION

We were told we were to have an HMI inspection in October 1988. The Inspectors themselves admitted that they were sent in because of the 'glare in the press' and also that they did not usually inspect schools that did not have a permanent Head in post, never mind the history of broken management that we had had.

We made representations to the NUT about the inspection. The NUT took a delegation to the DES to ask them to postpone the inspection until the newly appointed Head was in post. This delegation failed, and in the most stressful of conditions the inspection took place in November 1989.

DECEMBER 8TH - TEACHERS TO BE MOVED

On the afternoon of Thursday 8th December at 3.30 pm, ILEA Chief Education Officer, Mallen, together with Barbara McGilchrist, Chief Primary Inspector, Tony Smith, Director of Schools addressed us. They informed us that, as a result of ILEA's concern about standards at the school, all the teachers previously holding posts of responsibility in the school were to be moved to other schools from the beginning of the next term. Although no-one was being 'disciplined' and the measure was not to be seen in that light nonetheless the teachers were held to be 'collectively responsible' for the alleged failures in the school, and hence deserving of this drastic and extremely abrupt action.

No complaint had been made against the individuals concerned and no written statement of the Authority's intention was provided. The staff affected had been given no prior warning that their jobs were in such peril nor had the school as a whole received any intimation that the Authority regarded it as 'at risk' and requiring drastic measures. So, at a stroke, teachers who had been with the school for up to 22 years were told to vacate their classrooms and await transfer. We were to have no opportunity to make representations on our own behalf and were not to speak to the press.

The latter was a prohibition the Authority did not apply to itself. On December 8th the ILEA had already held a press briefing with the Guardian and the Independent, the only papers that did not have writs pending from the Highbury Quadrant coverage in the Summer, ensuring that only the Management's point of view would appear when the story broke in the press the next day. Earlier in the week, again whilst the teachers to be transferred went about their jobs with no inkling of what was to happen, ILEA had secretly arranged interviews for replacement teachers who were also sworn to secrecy and to be ready to replace the transferred teachers as soon as the announcement was made.

GOVERNORS AND PARENTS SUPPORT

The Governing body wholeheartedly supported the teachers who were to be moved. They refused to back the Authority's action. They passed strong motions in support of the teachers. They wrote to parents and called a Parents' Meeting, against the wishes of the Authority.

GOVERNORS PARENT MEETING

The parents were very angry about the proposals to move the teachers. They made that very clear at a Governor's called Parents' Meeting that the Authority declined to attend. They passed a strong motion of support for the teachers asking that they be retained at the school. Out of a potential of about 180 families 137 signed a Governor's petition asking that the teachers be kept in the school, only 4 parents refused to sign.

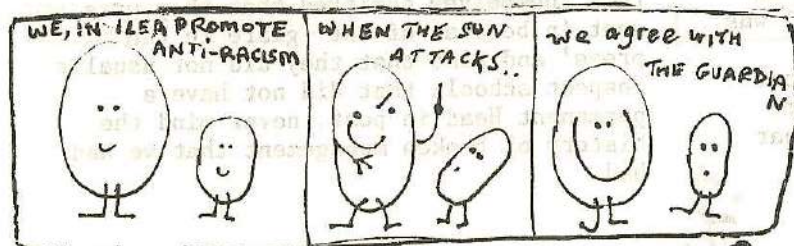
AUTHORITY'S PARENTS' MEETING

The Authority eventually called a Parents' Meeting for December 20th and they came to the school with the reporters from the Guardian, the Independent and the Times.

The meeting was chaired by the Education Officer, David Mallen, and attended by Senior Officers and Inspectors in the Authority. Teachers were allowed to attend provided that they remained silent and did not clap. David Mallen said the teachers have had their say. WHERE? WHEN?

He proceeded to totally ignore the anger and wishes of the parents who were incensed to hear that their children may have up to 14 temporary teachers in the time up to July. Mallen did however allow an ex-parent of the school, Ian MacDonald, a platform and he said that the real problem in Highbury Quadrant was a group of teachers who intimidated all who disagreed with them. The press left with ILEA Officers.

Even though this was clearly not the reason the Authority was using at the time, all the Senior Officers and Inspectors present said nothing to challenge him. MacDonald's speech was faithfully reported the next day in the 'quality press' who did not report the feelings of the parents at the meeting, many of whom were young Black women, who supported the teachers.



TERM ENDS

Teachers to be moved were stunned. They had 3 days to say goodbye to the children in a school they had taught in for up to 22 years. (They were later to be allowed one hour's access to the school to remove all their personal belongings at a time when children and staff were not in the building). There were no goodbyes for 2 classes - the two teacher governors did not even get that chance. They were in the High Court on Governors' action all day.

The children were extremely distressed and confused. Many of them knew that not only would their own teacher be gone but so would the other long serving teachers, who they may have looked to for security. The way and the speed with which ILEA moved the teachers gave the children no chance to grieve their loss or come to terms with it. They asked if it was because the 4th years were badly behaved? They asked if it was true that they did not learn anything in school? They were tragically torn between the love and respect they had for their teachers and what they knew was being said about them.

We left on the last day of term expecting to be back in January. The National Union had backed us effectively by advising members that they should not take our jobs. We were meeting with the Action Committee of the NUT the next day. We looked for continued strong support for our re-instatement.

We have subsequently discovered that in July 1987 the Chair of Governors wrote to County Hall, unbeknown to the Governors, with complaints about some members of staff. She was particularly enraged that NUT members were continuing our withdrawal of goodwill. The complaints made against staff in this letter were not investigated. Instead an 'Action Meeting' was held with Senior Officers of the Authority in July 1987. We do not know what was resolved at this meeting.

ilea

The Education Officer and Chief Executive David Mallen
Herman Ouseley

Chief Inspector David H Hargreaves

The County Hall London SE1 7PB

Ms M. Morrison
Acting Headteacher
Highbury Quadrant Primary School
Highbury New Park
London N5 2DP

Telephone 01-633 3317
Room 273
Please reply to ILEA/L/CI/5243
My reference
Your reference
Date 18 August 1988

Dear Ms Morrison,

Thank you for your letter and the enclosures. Naturally the Authority is concerned about the events that led up to the newspaper articles about the school and an investigation will take place. Ted Mercer will assist with this and will be visiting the school early next term. With regard to your concerns about the safety of staff and children I note that you have written to the DEO. He will be able to offer you appropriate advice and support. In the meantime I have sent a copy of your letter to Neil McClelland, the AEO, Primary.

I have been made aware through Ted Mercer of the curriculum developments that you and the staff have been engaged in and have been encouraged by the good progress that has been made. I can understand your concern and anxiety about the press articles and the very unpleasant letters and 'phone calls' the school has received. I hope that you will not allow this to spoil the remainder of your holiday and that you manage to have a restful break.

Yours sincerely,

BARBARA MacGILCHRIST

Chief Inspector Designate



What You Can Do!
Pass this Model Resolution
and send it to ILEA and the NUT

WE DEMAND

- (1) re-instatement of all six teachers to Highbury Quadrant
- (2) re-imposition of ban on NUT members going to work at Highbury Quadrant
- (3) continued and increased NUT support for Highbury Quadrant teachers who have been victimised for their commitment to anti-racist education and trade union membership
- (4) Support for their grievances to be expedited as soon as possible and to the fullest extent with full redress
- (5) a printed apology from the ILEA to all relevant agencies.

H.M.I - Whose Report?

From the conclusions of Her Majesty's Inspectorate published on 9.12.1988

H.M.I. say ...

87) There is an "urgent need to raise the quality of work and standards of learning."

88) The school, "after a protracted period of turbulence" needs "stability and firm leadership".

89) The curriculum being "narrow in range and shallow in content",

responsibilities should be "allocated to designated co-ordinators to be clearly defined and enacted."

.... "a need for a co-operative effort, on the part of the teachers, to plan and coordinate the work more thoroughly."

90) More firmness and control is needed in relation to discipline.

91) HMI found some positive aspects, viz, the nursery bilingual support and special needs.

92) The school will require "consistent and sustained support" and teachers need to "work more co-operatively to achieve agreed curricular objectives."

H.Q. Teachers say ...

Yes, isn't there everywhere? We tried our best - did the ILEA as the body responsible for the curriculum and its implementation?

We were looking forward to a new head with a long-term commitment to the school.

We accept there were gaps in the curriculum as there would be in a school with such unsettled management and disruption by the gutter press. Job descriptions might have helped.

We submitted to the NUT an 18-page document with 150 pages of supporting evidence which details our efforts to improve the curriculum; we do not think H.Q. is any better or worse than the school down the road.

This conclusion, which we dispute, is the result of selective viewing.

H.Q. had four inexperienced teachers and broken inconsistent management.

Fine. Yet the teachers previously responsible for those areas were moved.

Is this achieved by removing long-serving teachers from the school, leaving a relatively new staff led by a newly appointed head from outside the ILEA. We worked co-operatively as a matter of course; specifically to improve the curriculum. We produced guidelines, held INSET programmes, and looked forward to continuing this work under the new head.

(a) Inner London schools, primary as well as secondary, are having to cope with the results of 10 years of conservative government as well as with the Labour Party in disarray.

(b) HMI should know better than to hold a school responsible for failing black children, when black children, as well as girls and working class children in general have been failed for decades.

(c) According to HMI we should not have used AUR to buy helper hours to prevent them from being halved, but instead we should have bought resources. Considering that the school has been underfunded for years (e.g. the £10,000 worth of equipment lost during asbestos removal was "replaced" by £2,000), our A.U.R. money alone would not have been sufficient.

(d) There is some indication that HMI realised that the lack of consistent management was the cause for the lack of co-ordination and continuity.

The overall impression given in the report is that, despite a lot of criticism there are also positive aspects. Some of the criticism seems petty, and a number of strengths are not mentioned, or were overlooked. Perhaps this is not a criticism of HMI, they did, after all, only spend one week in the school; yet reading the report and re-reading it the conclusion is difficult to escape that they came into the school to pick holes, and holes they found, as they would.

Highbury Quadrant Now

CONDITIONS AT Highbury Quadrant Since THE REMOVAL OF FIVE SENIOR TEACHERS

Following the HMI Report (Dec. '88) which recommended a period of calm and stability, 5 senior postholders of long service at the school were removed from the school by the ILEA.

What followed was a period of disruption, confusion and insecurity for the children, parents and the school.

The ILEA promised the school teachers of experience with a "proven track record" to replace 5 classroom teachers (one being head of infants), the Language Support Teacher, who had forged close links with the community, particularly the Bangladeshi families of the school, the Head of S.E.N. department

The S.E.N. children had lost their support (this S.E.N. teachers has since been restored to the school because no replacement could be found). The Language Support Teacher was replaced with a .8 teacher who was to cover a loss of 1.5. The needy children are losers again.

At half term, the New Head took office in a school where the Deputy Head, who was the school's continuity, had been originally transferred, then told to go back in January, then was away ill, through stress of the situation. She returned to her job and on her second day back was told she was once again removed.

The school was then flooded with resources, equipment, supplies; mountains of it - it took all the helpers' hours to deal with it.

Teachers were given 'carte blanche' to order and orders were delivered in record time; days instead of months.

There was a closure for new teachers to sort out classrooms.

A team of maintenance workers arrived to smarten up the inside of the school, a team of gardeners, whose hours had been previously cut, were given the weekend (overtime) to carry out their duties. All of this maintenance work had been asked for many times by staff.

The way forward, the period of stability was in fact, a flood of new equipment, clean windows, new teachers, confusion, total lack of continuity and communication. In the view of a teacher of 16 years service in the school - it is an extremely fragmented and unhappy place.

The Authority was so insecure in its action that the Union Rep. was told by the Acting Head not to ask new teachers if they were NUT members or to discuss in the staffroom with them any of the events of the Autumn term.

Extracts from the covering letter for the HMI Report



David Mallen Esq
Education Officer
ILEA
The County Hall
London
SE1 7PB

Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House York Road London SE1 7PH

Direct Line 01-934 9221
Switchboard 01-934 9000
GTH Number 2914
Telex 23171

Your reference
Our reference

A35

9 December 1988

1. ILEA
2. Highbury Quadrant Primary School
3. Responsibility for action on the findings of the report rests in the first instance with the Authority and the school's governing body. I am to ask the Authority to consider, in consultation with the school's governing body, what measures are needed to improve the educational standards and management of the school, and what immediate steps they will take to put matters right. The Secretary of State shares the view of HM Inspectors that the school will require consistent and sustained support from the LEA.
4. I am to ask the Authority to report its conclusions to the Department and to indicate a plan of action which will:
 1. provide firm leadership and a period of stability; . . .



Caseworker's Diary

In early October the majority of staff at Highbury Quadrant were feeling extremely threatened and unsupported following

- the trial in the press after the Mandela assembly and Diana Stuarts' unsubstantiated complaint of harassment. (Later shown by an ILEA investigation to be unfounded).
- the investigation of political bias under Section 45 1986 (2) Education Act Order by DES and carried out by ILEA inspectors unbeknown to the teachers.
- the waves of hate mail and threats following further media sensationalist coverage.
- the lack of investigation of formal complaints lodged by 8 teachers and a number of Bengali parents against Diane Stuart
- no supportive public statements from the ILEA for the school, for following ILEA anti-racist policy in holding the Mandela assembly.
- the announcement of an HMI Inspection following 'the glare of publicity' at the school.
- any effective intervention by their Local Association in any of the above.

SO SUPPORTERS OF THE TEACHERS CALLED A Highbury Quadrant Defence Campaign Inaugural Meeting on Tuesday 18th October.

The Inner London Division of the NUT, despite two weeks notice, managed to only get a notice into most schools on the morning of the meeting.

In the event, teachers from a number of schools in London turned up, also parents and supporters, black and white, from Islington ARAFA, including representatives from local Bengali community. But no ILTA Officers and only 1 from Islington. However, we did get approval at ILTA Council the next night for the plan of action that had been resolved at the Defence Committee.

These included a lobby of ILEA Labour Group for support on 21st November, the production and circulation of a broadsheet, involving the National Executive to call off HMI Inspectors, the progressing of complaints by the agreed procedure, a public meeting on 10th November and requesting a special Governors meeting.

20th October - ILTA strike rally gave Highbury Quadrant teachers overwhelming support. Susie Burrows introduced them to Betty Hunter (Inner London Exec.) and June Fisher (National NUT Vice President) to try to get HMI Inspection stopped.

24th October - June Fisher gets Fred Jarvis to write to DES requesting postponement of HMI Inspection.

31st October - Diane Stuart granted indefinite paid leave.

2nd November - ILEA notify Kate Rex of investigation of Diane Stuart's complaint lodged on 20th July. This delay of 10 weeks was quite improper and in breach of Section X of ILEA Staff Code.

First Defence Campaign Bulletin distributed to London Schools.

3rd November - 5 Governors request a meeting to discuss the issue - arranged for 7th November.

5th November - The Chair of Governors - Jenni Hall - resigns because she disagrees about holding a Governors' Meeting over Mandela assembly. Removes her and Ian McDonald's child from school.

10th November - Islington Town Hall Defence Campaign Public Meeting with speakers from local Labour Party, World Council of Churches, Anti-Apartheid, Bengali Community and Islington Race Committee. Despite wide-spread publicity little support from other Islington schools, but good support from community and some other London schools. 1 ILTA Officer present.

11th November - Deputation to Eric Bolton Chief HMI at DES led by Fred Jarvis and June Fisher to seek a postponement of the HMI Inspection. The effects of the continued adverse media coverage, threats, and resulting low morale, and the fact that there had been no stable management in the school for 3½ years (6 temporary and 1 permanent head) would mean that the Inspection would place the teachers under an intolerable strain. The request was rejected, which was not surprising as they had allowed the meeting to be held so near to the planned start of the Inspection.

13th November - Spent all day with Kate Rex amassing answer to her complaint. The evidence in her favour i.e. that the reported incident which started it all NEVER HAPPENED is overwhelming.

14/18th November - 5 HMI's inspect the school

21st November - Defence Campaign lobby ILEA Labour Group. Six supporters address Labour Group. Martin Rodgers - Chair of Schools, promises to issue a statement of support for the holding of Mandela assembly.

22nd November - David Mallen, ILEA Education Officer, reply to DES read to staff, but they are not given copies. It was Mr Mallen's view that teaching about Apartheid was not controversial, but that to mention Nelson Mandela without putting the alternative (sic. Mr Botha) was controversial, and that an error of judgement had been made. Verbal report from HMI given to acting head responsible to ILEA.

22nd November - (1.23 am) - Yvonne Conolly, Islington Primary Inspector, writes to Chief Inspector MacGilchrist, about verbal HMI report which of course, given the circumstances is generally bad. She suggests 'that some fundamental and perhaps radical changes will be necessary to counter the radical attitudes in this school, thus providing an opportunity for the newly appointed headteacher to be able to create an effective school organisation. Key teachers appear to be so wedded to extreme ideological dogma which regulates much of what has been and is understood and practised in the school'.

So here we have the real reason for the attack on the teachers.

23rd November - I accompany Kate Rex up to County Hall to have her complaint investigated. ILEA try to define harassment as that being perceived by complainant, rather than what can be proved or disapproved. We vigorously protest against this, along with many procedural irregularities. Eventually Kate is cleared completely.

30th November - Meet with Union Solicitors and Kate Rex and Maggie Morrison - over future Union support, especially in defamation cases against 10 newspapers over treatment of Mandela Assembly. It appeared several papers were about to settle.

29/30th November - secret and confidential report produced by Guljar Kanji, ILEA Senior Staff Inspector Primary, saying a group of teachers are too militant and must be moved because of their active Trade Unionism and anti-racism. This report drew on a whole series of memo's and other secret reports from inspectors and others, which no teacher at the school had ever seen, been informed of, or been given a chance of answering. This report never appeared officially, but later was leaked to the TES and Telegraph by ILEA. The report is endorsed by MacGilchrist, Chief Inspector, and was shown to leading members of ILEA on 2nd December when decision is taken to take this unprecedented action.

8th December - Children sent home early. David Mallen, Barbara MacGilchrist, Chief ILEA Inspector, come to see staff and Governors.

Mr Mallen informed the staff that 8 unnamed teachers would be removed from the school for failing to deliver the curriculum needs of the children. Those to be removed were the teachers who had held posts of responsibility either before 1987 or incentive allowances after. He could close the school but he had chosen not to.

No charges were made in writing and no teachers were named, but of course they could be identified.

The ILEA released their decision to the Guardian, Independent and Telegraph before they told the teachers

Met with the teachers that night.

I phone June Fisher VP, who says they have already issued a statement and the teachers will get full NUT support.

I also phone Betty Hunter, Dick North (Acting ILTA Secretary) to discuss the situation and rang many teachers all over London to go to a Defence Campaign.

9th December - The Guardian attacks the teachers at the school on front page. Kate Rex and I meet Graham Clayton, NUT Solicitor and later Shaun Doherty and the President, Malcolm Horne, join us.

Firstly, we agree the wording of a fax to ILEA asking them to put their proposals in writing or withdraw them.

Then we agree the wording of a press release with Malcolm Horne. He also agrees to boycott jobs at the school and visits the school to meet members.

The DES then bring forward the release of HMI report on the school. NUT issue a further press statement.

Early that morning I had been contacted by teachers who were being forced into Highbury Quadrant, for Union support not to go. Tony Smith - Director of schools - states he had NUT support for removing teachers. Later he withdraws his threats to advisory teachers refusing to go to Highbury Quadrant. District Officer is sent to support them.

Defence Campaign meet Red Rose.

2nd December - Teachers are contacted throughout ILEA to replace Highbury Quadrant teachers and sworn to secrecy.

12th December -150 page answer to ILEA with supporting evidence delivered to NUT Solicitor for Counsel's opinion.

Large lobby of 450 called by Defence Campaign outside Governors' Meeting at the school. Governors resolve that teachers should stay at the school.

After Lobby, Defence Campaign meeting at Pegasus resolves;

- a) ILTA be asked to produce a newsletter with all information, one for every member to be in schools by the 1st day of next term.
- b) To organise for indefinite escalating strike action from the first week of next term, starting in Islington schools, then Hackney, then other areas if necessary until teachers are reinstated. This was carried by a 3:1 indicative vote with ITA & ILTA Officers against or abstaining.

Primary teachers voting for this were from different parts of London. It was asked that this should be put to the National Officers' Meeting in 2 days time as a way forward, as there were no Association or ILTA meetings before then and speed was essential, being nearly the end of term.

When Islington, and some ILTA Officers said they would not win this sort of action in Islington and they did not agree with it, we argued that they would win it, if all members were informed of all the issues and the Highbury Quadrant members and the Officers visited schools to give the arguments.

Teachers in Hackney, especially Primary teachers, had already been asking as to when strike action was going to start for Highbury Quadrant. The ILTA newsletter was crucial so that all schools would know the facts and write to the Executive calling for strike action right at the beginning of term.

13th December -Chair a Press Conference called by Defence Campaign with Governors, parents, ILTA and local Islington ARAFA.

Strong statement from Governors that ILEA have tried to shift blame for their management failures, which are clearly defined in the HMI report on a group of teachers.

14th December -Counsel's opinion told to a meeting of Fred Jarvis, Boland, Clayton, Horne, Fisher, myself, 2 teachers from school and 3 ILTA Officers - strong case but should see Neil Fletcher first. Agreed to issue boycott circular 420/88. Malcolm Horne deferred discussion of industrial action.

ILTA Officers adopt a policy of 1 day demonstrative strike, rather than policy of Defence Campaign, supported by large majority of NUT members at Highbury Quadrant of strike across Islington indefinite and escalating.

At the end of this meeting I handed a letter signed by 7 members affected saying they wanted me to be their representative and case worker, to June Fisher and Boland. At this time I was the only Union Officer familiar with the detailed reply from the school.

16th December -NUT deputation to Neil Fletcher. Neither National NUT, nor ILTA thought it important to have me as the case worker, nor any of the teachers from the school on the delegation. We were not told about it.

Fletcher stated the action taken was not a result of the HMI's report but based on ILEA's own inspectors. Fred Jarvis attacked Neil Fletcher as cowardly but could not persuade him to change their position.

That evening I addressed a Parents' Meeting at the school called by Governors. The parents were most disturbed that the teachers were being completely denied any chance to answer the case against them.

19th December -Defence Campaign organised a lobby of ILEA Labour Group. Eventually they heard a delegation. But their minds were already made up. We learned for the first time that Governors are going to seek an injunction to stop ILEA taking the decision. Petition signed by 137 parents presented to ILEA.

CIRCULAR	
CIRCULAR No:	420/88(CCU)
DATE:	14 December 1988
TO:	NUT Representatives in all ILEA Schools - URGENT
Dear Colleague	
You will be aware that the ILEA is seeking to transfer seven teachers, all members of the Union, out of Highbury Quadrant Primary School, Islington.	
The Union considers that the ILEA has grossly mishandled the situation at the school. It is clear from the HMI Report on that school that the problems which HMI identified are in large measure due to management failings but by taking action which it has not seen fit to explain, the Authority has tried to put upon individual teachers responsibility for its own failings.	
The Union is of course pursuing this case with the Authority but at this stage there is urgent advice to be given to all members in ILEA.	
We are aware that the Authority is seeking to find volunteers to transfer in to Highbury Quadrant Primary School. Some members have already been approached, and, on Union advice have refused. Other members may be similarly approached therefore, at least pending any further discussions with the Authority and any further advice, we must advise all members in ILEA as follows:	
No NUT member should agree to transfer in to Highbury Quadrant Primary School and any member approached by the Authority to this end should inform the Union's regional office (tel no 368 2763) immediately.	
I would ask NUT representatives to convey the above advice to all members immediately.	
Yours sincerely	
FRED JARVIS General Secretary	

20th December - Governors' High Court injunction fails as barrister not well briefed and it was premature. ILEA Education Committee adopts Education Officer's report, despite opposition from teachers, members and 3 labour members.

That evening the Authority has meeting with parents.

21st December - Governors seek judicial review and injunction backed by the NUT to stop teachers being moved. Justice Rose says he has already read about the case in the Times and MacDonald's comments. Again barrister is not briefed on teachers' case and makes a number of errors. Leave for judicial review is granted but not an injunction.

22nd December - All teachers, myself, a member of ILTA Officers meet June Fisher and Dick Boland and Graham Clayton. Will not support industrial action as do not want any more Eileen Crosbies. They agree to keep everything as it is until January. Keep boycott and demand another meeting with Fletcher. All the Highbury Quadrant teachers at the meeting said they would strike.

23rd December - Negotiations over telephone between Boland and Tony Smith. At 1 p.m. the boycott is lifted and a deal is struck, that in exchange for 'an open and free ranging discussion with the AEO Primary on 3rd January in the presence of District Officer, the Union no longer opposes the forced movement of the teachers. The Deputy Head is allowed to stay at school.

That evening June Fisher rings the members and Dick North ILTA, with the 'good news'. The teachers concerned were never asked for their agreement and it was not what they wanted.

Dick North, without checking with them thinks the Highbury Quadrant teachers have agreed, and cancels the printing of broadsheet.

28th December - Turned up to the meeting to write broadsheet - cancelled.

2nd January - I meet with all 6 teachers. They agree to attend interviews, but want me to represent them, with S. Canket, District Officer. They also say they were never asked for their agreement to the deal. I 'phone June Fisher and she is greatly opposed to my representing the members as I might negotiate! She said it was not part of the deal,

3rd January - Neil McClelland agrees to see us all collectively but says he has no power to alter decision to move the teachers. Later during individual interviews he states each teacher had done more than required in their job. They were being moved as collectively had failed to give curriculum leadership. He said none of them had failed individually!

4th January - We see John Hart Divisional Education Officer and Yvonne Connolly about placement. It became clear they could not guarantee jobs of the same status to move them to, in contravention of the ILEA Committee report. Several teachers asked for paid leave due to the stress they had been put under. This was granted.

6th January - The Special Needs Teacher was allowed back to school as they could not get a replacement. Tony Smith compliments her excellent work at the school.

9th January - We meet Malcolm Horne, June Fisher and Stuart Canket and ILTA. The National Officers demand I withdraw from the case or they will withdraw all backing. They think the deal they made over Christmas was fine. The teachers should take up grievances, they now say.

12th January - Special meeting of Union Action Committee turns down request for one day protest strike and re-imposition of the boycott, on the grounds that attendant publicity would not assist suitable placement of members. They say there is no evidence the Authority have breached the agreement reached over Christmas, so cannot re-impose boycott. Governors lose case for expedited hearing.

25th January - Policy and Resources endorse position.

Mr R Boland
2 Woodside
Laughton
Nr Lewes
BN8 6SL

507J
Room 264
ILEA/SO/TS
23 December 1988

Dear Mr Boland,

Highbury Quadrant Primary School

Further to our telephone conversations over the past 24 hours I would like to confirm the substance of our conversations.

1. That we agree that we have been in informal discussion in response to your letter to NUT Representatives of 14th December and that a formal meeting has been arranged with the Education Officer for Tuesday 3rd January 1989 at 4pm at County Hall.
2. That the replacement for the post of Mrs Douglass, the seventh teacher at Highbury Quadrant, who has resigned, is not at issue.
3. That the deputy head is to return to the school on Tuesday 3rd January.
4. That the six Highbury Quadrant teachers to be transferred are offered an open and free ranging discussion with the AEO/Primary at Divisional Office on Tuesday 3rd January in accordance with the terms of the letter sent to them, a copy of which is attached.
5. That the Union will undertake to remove its temporary ban on members agreeing to transfer to Highbury Quadrant and will notify them as soon as practicable.

I would be grateful for an early notification of your agreement.

Yours sincerely

Tony Smith

Tony Smith
Director of Education (Schools)

FIGHTING RACISM AT THE SCHOOL

"It is the responsibility of all teachers to consider the situation in the local community since it affects the learning process - schools are not islands and cannot shut their ideas to major community concerns - racism may be one of these".

Bill Stubbs
ILEA Education Officer, 1982.

In attempting to respond to this statement by ILEA, a school must radically examine its internal practices and engage in external support work with the local community to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to develop their full potential in school.

The ILEA required its schools to implement an anti-racist policy. We welcomed this and modelled ours on the ILEA's guidelines. We never saw the policy as a separate entity but an integral force that would inform everything else we did. We always saw its purpose as being to access children equally to education in our school, Highbury Quadrant, and to combat racism effectively.

HOW DID WE PUT IT INTO PRACTICE?

Learning Materials

We looked at the learning materials in the school and removed those with racist images. Our Black Parents Group worked with us on this. The children were also involved. The older children surveyed the books we used to discover the nature of the images portrayed. They went on to consider the implications for their learning from what they found. We decided that all new materials bought should contain positive black images.

WHAT DID WE DO?

We wrote a policy that involved as many people as possible in the school. This meant that it took ages with lots of discussions - this we saw as crucial. Teaching and non-teaching staff were involved in the discussion and the writing. Community groups and the schools' Black Parents group were consulted. We never regarded the policy as fixed or finished. We knew we would become aware of its deficiencies as we put it into practice,

Teachers looked at the curriculum and began the process of making it more representative and appropriate for the children we taught.

Racist Abuse

It was agreed that racist abuse was unacceptable in school. This was discussed fully with staff, parents and children.

Informing Parents

Before the Industrial Action, we talked about what we were doing at Parents' Meetings. Staff mounted an exhibition of racist and positive images found in the books in Highbury Quadrant so that parents could see what we were doing and why we were doing it. Teachers talked to concerned parents often until late in the evenings. It was talked about in PTA meetings, and at Governors' Meetings. As what we were trying to do was put into practice ILEA's policies, we asked Mike Hussey of the Multi-Cultural Inspectorate to talk to our parents about this. After all of this, and while the dialogue with parents continued, when we put the anti-racist policy into action, there was still a small group of active parents who did not agree with it.

Bi-Lingual Children

We had a large number of bi-lingual children in school who, when we examined their experience of learning did not have an equal access to the education in the school. At this time there was no mother tongue provision in the school (identified by the ILEA, and reports such as Swan/Rampton as necessary for effective learning). We campaigned for and won a part time Bengali teacher and a part time Turkish teacher. We committed resources to buying mother tongue learning materials.

The provision for learning support teachers for the bi-lingual children was well under our entitlement. Again we campaigned for and won proper provision for the numbers of children we had.

We acknowledged the importance of communication between home and school being two-way and the positive effect that has on children's learning. We also had to recognise that for families whose first language was not English communication was not even one-way. To remedy that we tried always to use interpreters where we could in correspondence or meetings (general or individual). To support the Bangladeshi families a Sylheti speaking home/school liaison worker was appointed after a lot of hard campaigning by the teachers.

Tried in the gutter for an anti-racist stance

Carb Times
23.12

Staff

We asked the governors that an importance be given to appointing Black teachers, that is where 2 candidates of equal calibre were applying for a post to secure an ethnic balance on the staff.

We challenged the institutional racism of the selection process for ancillary staff and for the first time were able to appoint Black ancillary staff to Highbury Quadrant.

We challenged the Authority's decision to move one of the three black teachers from the school, but were unsuccessful. In a school with a large number of Black and ethnic minority children Black teachers are particularly important.

Access

The most basic and restricted interpretation of equality of opportunity taken since World War 2, when the issue became prominent, concerns the simple right of access to education. We heard that our children were being racially harassed and attacked on the way to and from school and hence their attendance was poor - they were in effect being denied just that equality of access. We escorted them to and from school (in our time). Some afternoons we were taking children in three different directions. In doing this we found out that one group of children living on a nearby Estate were living under seige in the times they were not at school.

Living Under Seige

They and their parents were unable to be outside without being attacked. They could not easily go to the shops or the launderette. Even going to the neighbourhood office meant running a gauntlet of abuse. A fire was lit outside one of the Bangladeshi family's doors. Offensive rubbish was put through their letter box, doors were banged much of the night, windows were broken etc. The children living in such fear had little chance of being able to fully participate in their education and were under great stress.

The School Response

It was obviously necessary for the school to support these children.

We approached local community groups through ARAFA and together pressed the Council to offer practical support for the families being attached. Acting with the community we brought the seriousness of the situation to the attention of the Council's Housing Department. It was eventually decided that the Council would take eviction proceedings against one family, with a boy at our school, who were particularly responsible for the harassment and attacks.

Islington ARAFA was started during this period to try to counteract known fascist and racist activity in the area. The convenor was Anna Sullivan. Many people from the community, black and white, including teachers from Highbury Quadrant and many from Hackney became involved. ARAFA supported the families on the Estate. The Law Centre represented the families.

ARAFA ran a playscheme, which took mostly Bangladeshi children out every weekend and gave them a chance to play in safety. This latter included Bengali children from bed and breakfast hotels with whole families living in one tiny room. Members of ARAFA sat in the flats of those people who were afraid at night and had asked for such support.

They worked with the Tenants' Association by leafletting on the Estate and calling a meeting to discuss racism on the Estate.

The Court Case

Evidence from the Bangladeshi parents was crucial to the Council's court case. Obviously those families were and felt most at risk in giving evidence. ARAFA worked to minimise the risks. They made sure that the security provisions the Council had agreed to make in their flats were carried out i.e. the strengthening of windows, the installation of telephones and metal letter boxes. This involved such voluntary work as the teachers from the school ringing the letter box manufacturers in Wales to ensure delivery of the boxes, or teachers sitting in the Contractor's vans the evening before the court case to make sure that all the flats had their front windows strengthened.

Those Bangladeshi parents who agreed to give evidence were supported by being able to talk to the Court's interpreter beforehand. They were taken to the court the week before the case by ARAFA so that they would be familiar with the buildings and the Procedure.

This work resulted in three parents feeling confident enough to give evidence. This, and that of two teachers, resulted in the Council winning their case (regarded as a test case by other Local Authorities seeking to take similar action.)

The family in the Court Case had a history of involvement with the NF,

Yet the Senior EWO for Islington gave evidence for this family and against them being evicted. She claimed the family were not racist! At the end of the case, the family openly threatened the Bangladeshi parents, Kate Rex and Anna Sullivan. Anna has for many years been involved in taking on racism and facism in Islington, in schools and the community at great personal cost. In July 1987 petrol bombs were thrown into Anna's house while she and her family slept. Half the house was gutted and they just escaped with their lives. The police were given names of known racist suspects, but did nothing. It was quite obvious this was a reprisal.

Home/School Liaison Worker/Escort

At the time of preparation for the court case, teachers from the school campaigned for the ILEA to pay for an escort for the children who were being harrassed (to provide the service they had carried out voluntarily for 18 months on a rota basis with other parents from the school). They also campaigned for the appointment of a home/school liaison worker. Both these provisions were eventually conceded as essential by the Authority but only after many, many meetings involving all related institutions.

We were appalled that the ILEA gave us no support and indeed attacked us while we were trying to carry out this work.

We did this work because we knew that no school can act in a vacuum from the community that its children come from, however much others might sometimes prefer us to!

Homelessness

We had a child in school who belonged to one of the families declared by Tower Hamlets to be intentionally homeless. She came to us after many months of living under this threat. In the time she was at Highbury Quadrant her family lived in great

uncertainty about where they would sleep each night. Teachers worked with the Tower Hamlets Homeless Families Campaign and spent a lot of their own time supporting the family on a local day to day level.

We have been accused of 'top-down' anti-racism i.e. imposing strategies, This is untrue. We have always worked with the children and their families to address the problems they continue to suffer because of the racism which surrounds them. We have never imposed any measures, and if any labels were to be applied it should be one of 'bottom-up' anti-racism. But we had, as many schools do, a group of racist parents. We had to do the work despite them for the sake of all the children.

As teachers, we were active in this respect and tried our best. Our belief was in action and not the passivity of the Authority's paper policies.

In our attempt to combat racism, to offer all the children the education they deserved, we were viewed as unmanageable by the Authority. We could not have done any of the anti-racist work if this were true.

Mr. B. Wiltshire
Members Lobby
ILEA
County Hall
London SE1

Dear Bernard:

Re: Highbury Quadrant School.

LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY,
TOWN HALL,
MARE STREET,
LONDON E8 1EA

14 October 1988

I wrote a letter to you on 8/9/88 regarding the tense situation that existed in Highbury Quadrant School due to the adverse publicity of the Nelson Mandela assembly in the gutter press. I also handed over a set of papers to you.

I expected that ILEA would extend its whole hearted support to the valiant staff and parents of this school. This is the hour of need; and ILEA must, on the basis of its Equal Opportunities Policy, take up the initiative and counter the distortion and bias that is being propagated by the racists and their friends in the media.

There is a very large number of Bangladeshi Homeless children attending this school and they and their parents are grateful for the way the school, Headmistress and all the staff - with an odd exception - treat them. I am enclosing a copy of the letter written to Mr. Hart by the parents of the Bangladeshi children. It is apparent from the content of the letter that they are getting tremendous support from an individual teacher against whom the hysteria has been created by the gutter press.

We, the Bangladeshi community, are the most deprived community in every respect of social measurement. The press is not attacking that individual teacher; it is attacking all the children and parents of the children who are profiting from the school.

I would like to hear what ILEA is doing to help, support and assist the school, staff and the parents in view of the onslaught by the racists. I am sure there is no dearth of commitment on ILEA's part, but we want action and I want to remind ILEA that policy does not mean anything unless there is undaunted implementation of that policy.

This school is unique in the sense that some of the staff of this school were instrumental in bringing a perpetrator of racial harassment of a Bangladeshi family to justice last year, and that was the first case in Islington where the perpetrator was evicted.

I am sending copies of this letter to the following distinguished people so that they could give support to the school, staff and parents, and so that the propaganda of the gutter press cannot triumph over the moral superiority of anti-racism and anti-facism.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

(Signature)
Nasrullah M. Syed (Cllr.)

CC Mr. Jack Straw MP
Mr. Clare Short MP
Mr. Alan Fletcher
Mr. A. Rice
Mr. S. Benn
Mr. M. Hoon
Mr. A. P. Russell
Mr. T. Harries
Mr. M. Pugh
Mr. P. Jones
Mr. Jeremy Gifford MP
Mr. Brian Astor MP
Mr. Chris Smith MP
Mr. Thomas Sargant MP
Mr. Les Fennell
Mr. Harman Ouseley
Mr. Ted Heath
Mr. E. Butler
Mr. P. B. Thompson
Mr. J. H. ...

KIDS SEE RACE ROW TEACHER IN TEARS

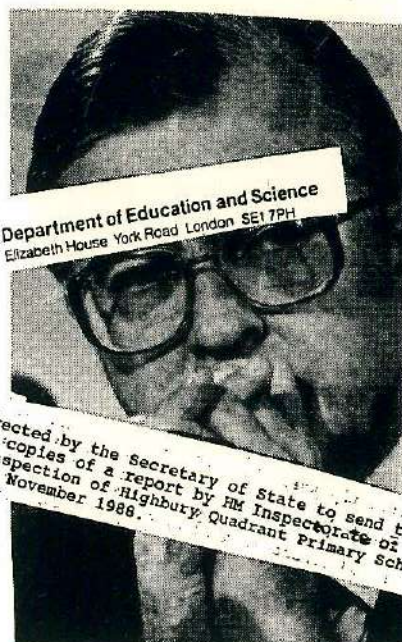
She is 'tried' for snub to
Mandela tribute



■ Neil Fletcher:

WORLD TONIGHT
B.B.C. Radio 4
Monday 13/2/1989, 10.30 p.m.

Our concern was that the teachers were putting their avowed political concerns and their determination to fight anti-racism (sic) albeit in an inappropriate way before their professional responsibilities to deliver a high-quality education. Parents don't want their children going to school to learn slogans.



Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House York Road London SE1 7PH

Isam directed by the Secretary of State to send the Authority the attached copies of a report by HM Inspectorate of schools of a formal inspection of Highbury Quadrant Primary School between 14 and 18 November 1988.

Kenneth Baker

Key teachers appear to be wedded to ^{so} extreme ideological dogma which regulates much of what has been and is understood and practised in the school, that they have actually come to believe that there is no other way. They appear to be genuinely surprised when other ideas are put to them because they feel that they are doing the best for the children. That in my view is dangerous; and would seem to require solutions of either:-

- a) the separation of those teachers who have continued to pursue activities that run counter and inhibit the possibilities of good primary education at the school for years;

MEMO from Yvonne Conolly G.I. D03 to chief Inspector ILEA

Nelson
Mandela
70

Mandela
row school
praised by
inspector

Happy
Birthday

